

Dear Co-Chairs Bartolomeo and Willis, and the Members of the Higher Education Committee,

My name is Cristian L.; I have lived in New Haven for 5 years. I attended one year of high school in my Mexico before I came to the United States. I had to stop attending high school for financial reasons. Although upon arriving in the United States, I had work instead of attending high school, I am now pursuing my G.E.D. The work I was able to find at fourteen years old, when I first came to the U.S., was working 12-hour night shifts at a grocery store and restaurant in New Haven. The owner of that store has since been found by a Connecticut Department of Labor investigation to have committed wage theft. I was one of the workers whose wages the owner stole. You will understand that I would have preferred to be in school.

I have dreams of one day owning my own business, and for that reason I would love to attend college in Connecticut to study business administration. Unfortunately college is very expensive, and without access to financial aid I would not be able to attend. I am in the process of pursuing a U-Visa, which would provide me with a path towards citizenship, and eventually allow me to access financial aid. I am told, however, that the U-Visa process can be very slow and I would love to attend college as soon as I complete my G.E.D. I have many responsibilities beyond paying for my own rent, transport, and books including supporting my parents who depend on me for a financial contribution. Because of these responsibilities I simply cannot attend college without access to financial aid.

If I could attend college my future will be different in two respects. First, if I attend college I am certain that I would be able to make more money, to support my family and myself and have a better life here in Connecticut. Second, college would allow me to realize my dreams

of owning my own business. I would love to have the independence of being my own boss and having the freedom of making my own ideas a reality. I know that I could be a successful business owner, but I also know that studying finance, management, accounting and other subjects will be essential to my success.

The proposed bill before the Higher Education Committee GB 6845, that would grant me access to financial aid, would allow me to realize these dreams. I love Connecticut, I love New Haven, and I want to give back to this community. With access to financial aid I could get an education that will let me give back as much as I possibly can. Please pass GB 6845.

Sincerely,

Cristian L.